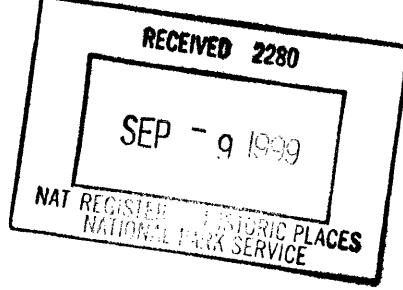


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1241

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Sixth Street School
other names/site number: Hawthorne Elementary School

2. Location

street & number Sixth and C Streets not for publication N/A
city or town Hawthorne vicinity N/A
state Nevada code NV county Mineral code 021 zip code 89415

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility, meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ronald M. Jones 8-30-99
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register ___ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register ___ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

Elson H. Beall

Beall Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: School

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: WORK IN PROGRESS Sub: Art and Cultural Center

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

roof Polyglass

walls Stucco

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See attached.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing).

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

Period of Significance 1936-1950

Significant Dates 1936; 1942; 1950

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Willis Church/Kent and Nelson

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See Attached.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets). See attached.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.72 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>11</u>	<u>358340</u>	<u>4266720</u>	<u>3</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u>4</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See attached.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See attached.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mella Rothwell Harmon
organization State Historic Preservation Office date May 20, 1999
street & number 100 N. Stewart Street telephone (702) 687-7601
city or town Carson City state NV zip code 89701

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mineral County School District
street & number P.O. Box 5040 telephone 775-945-2403
city or town Hawthorne state NV zip code 89415

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Sixth Street School, Hawthorne, Mineral County, NV

7. Description

The Sixth Street School is located on a 1.72-acre parcel at the corner of Sixth Street and C Street in Hawthorne, Nevada. The site has always held a school since the first two-room, wood-framed educational building was built in 1886, six years after the founding of the town. The original school was demolished in 1936 to make way for the "low building of very modern design" (WPA 1940:220). The present school, which no longer serves in that capacity, is situated at the south end of the parcel and fills its entire width. The playground and ball field extend northward behind the building, and landscaping on the front consists of lawn, cement walkways, a centrally-placed flagpole, and a row of poplar trees. Diagonally across Sixth Street from the school is the historic Mineral County Courthouse, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

The Sixth Street School was built in 1936. The building's architectural details are subtle, but unmistakably Art Deco. Its low, clean lines, and horizontal emphasis are punctuated by vertical projections along its façade. The one-story building originally consisted of four spacious classrooms, two on either side of the main entry, and a basement that housed restrooms and storerooms. In 1942 and 1950, classroom additions were built, resulting in a school building that comprised 10,000 square feet of space on the main floor and 1,500 square feet in the basement.

The original central section consists of a symmetrical, rectangular block facing Sixth Street, and a rear projection housing the auditorium. The main block contains classrooms at each end and administrative offices in the middle. There are two entrances, each set above two shallow steps, leading into the classroom areas, one providing access to the west end, and the other to the east end. These doors are set into shallow projections, which create a slight U configuration. The entire building is sheathed in stucco, and all wall surfaces, with the exception of the front, are flat. The minimal, yet definitive Art Deco ornamentation is restricted to the front façade, which is characterized by shallow projections at the two entrances, with two-layer pilasters rising over the doors to above the roofline, which forms a parapet. The central portion, between the two projections, is decorated by a pair of extenuated Art Deco pilasters bracketing a central window. The entire building sits on a concrete perimeter foundation, with a deep base that extends beyond the wall surfaces by about one inch, accentuating the horizontality of the building. The building's roof is flat and lies behind a low parapet. The parapet is raised above the two entrances, emphasizing the Art Deco ornamentation.

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Section 7, 8 Page 2

Sixth Street School, Hawthorne, Mineral County, NV

7. Description, continued

Fenestration in the building consists of metal frame windows without trim. The arrangement and rhythm of the windows lends a design element that is distinctive and style-defining. Along the front façade, the windows are set centrally into each bay and consist of three small lights above three tall, slender lights. Front windows in the classroom sections consist of four contiguous banks in the same configuration. Windows along the rear elevation are the same single windows found in the front. Entry doors into the main block are solid wood, without decoration.

Projecting from the rear of the main block is an auditorium. Eleven concrete steps on the east elevation lead through a single door onto the stage. Also at the rear of the building are steps leading to ground level from the basement. Perpendicular at either end of the main block are the wings added in 1942 and 1950. These additions are unornamented, but match the massing, surface treatment, and fenestration of the main block. These wings added four classrooms to the school.

The school, which served as a storehouse for the school district for nearly 15 years, is currently in fair condition. It is, however, undergoing rehabilitation for use as an community art and cultural center, and will be restored to its former glory. With the exception of its condition, the school retains all seven aspects of integrity. The school, which has not been modified since 1950, remains on its original site, which has held Hawthorne's school buildings since 1886. Although it has not served actively as a school since the early 1980s, it is unmistakably a school building of its period, as evidenced by its building and landscape designs, and therefore it retains integrity of design, setting, feeling, and association. Integrity of workmanship and materials are apparent through knowledge of the architect's building philosophy, which was transformed from a Beaux-Arts mode to a "scientific" method of school design that sought to create a "safe and sane use," through efficient use of materials and construction methods. The Sixth Street School symbolizes a significant period in architectural history when a general change in architectural paradigms from classical to modern, was taking place. The school also represents an important phase of Hawthorne's history, when the town experienced dramatic population growth during the Great Depression and as a result of heightened activity associated with World War II.

8. Significance

The Sixth Street School, built in 1936, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significance to western military history and the historical

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Section 8 Page 3

Sixth Street School, Hawthorne, Mineral County, NV

8. Significance, continued

development of education in Hawthorne, and under Criterion C for its Art Deco style of architecture (the only known example in Hawthorne), rendered by a young, enthusiastic architect from the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture. The building's period of significance extends from 1936 to 1950 to include both expansion events (1942 and 1950), which were funded by federal programs related to the United State's involvement in World War II.

Criterion A

History of Hawthorne, Nevada

The town of Hawthorne, Nevada is located approximately 135 miles southeast of Reno, at an elevation of 4,300 feet. Hawthorne is situated in a basin surrounded by the Excelsior and Gillis mountain ranges on the north, east, and south, and the Wassuk Range, with 11,303-foot-high Mount Grant, on the west. Northwest of Hawthorne is 23-mile-long Walker Lake.

In 1880, plans were made for a narrow-gauge railroad to run from Mound House, Nevada to Keeler, California to serve the numerous mining districts along that route. The railroad was called the Carson and Colorado (C & C). The railroad's executives were also involved with the Virginia and Truckee Railroad (V & T), which served the internationally-famous Comstock Lode. By October 1880, H.M. Yerington, Director and Superintendent of the C & C, had chosen a townsite for a depot south of Walker Lake. The townsite was one-mile square, laid out in the manner of Sacramento, California, and named after Yerington's friend William Hawthorne (Carlson 1974:131). Three tents were set up in advance of the railroad's arrival, consisting of a lodging house, a butcher shop, and a general store. The town was expected to boom after the railroad arrived, because it would then be a junction between the rail route and the new wagon road that ran southwest to Bodie, California. The wagon road was owned by the same men who were constructing the C & C and the road grade would be used to serve both purposes (Myrick 1962).

On April 7, 1881, the train tracks reached Hawthorne, 100 miles from the starting point in Mound House, Nevada. On April 14, 1881, the first townsite lots were offered for sale and more than 800 people, including Nevada Governor Kinkead, rode the excursion train to attend the auction. In anticipation of this big event, enterprising individuals had set up tent saloons with grand names such as the Silver Palace, Bank Exchange, Big Bonanza, and the Field of Gold Cloth. In a three-hour

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Sixth Street School, Hawthorne, Mineral County, NV

8. Significance, continued

period, 35 lots were auctioned, ranging in price from \$100 to \$195 (Myrick 1962). The Hawthorne Depot was built at the corner of F and Fifth Streets, and once regular train service started, the town began to grow. By mid-May 1881, a post office was established, and by the end of that month a water system was installed, running the extent of every street in town. Thirty houses had been built by the end of the summer and in 1882, the rail tracks were extended to Candelaria, Nevada. Hawthorne became county seat of Esmeralda County, and a brick courthouse was built between 1883 and 1884 (Hohmann and Ryden 1997).

In March 1900, Carson and Colorado Railroad was purchased by Southern Pacific Railroad. Southern Pacific, a standard-gauge line, chose to run their tracks on the east side of Walker Lake, and establish a freight station at Thorne. The last train to Hawthorne ran on August 18, 1905, and the establishment of a rail yard in Mina, southeast of Hawthorne, later that year brought an end to Hawthorne's significance as a railroad trade and distribution center. Hawthorne was further insulted in 1907, when the Esmeralda county seat was moved to Goldfield, which was experiencing a mining boom. Hawthorne would reclaim county-seat status again in February 1911, however, when Mineral County was formed by an act of legislation. The 1880s county courthouse stood ready to resume its duties, but a fire that year destroyed nearly the entire town. The courthouse was spared, however, as was the two-room schoolhouse, which stood diagonally across Sixth Street from it. Hawthorne's main industry after the railroad left was mining, which declined from 1912 to 1920. Hawthorne's population in 1910 was 471, but it decreased to 244 by 1920 (Hohmann and Ryden 1997).

In 1926, Hawthorne experienced another devastating fire, but again the courthouse and school were spared. Another disaster across the country would prove to be Hawthorne's salvation. On June 10, 1926, Lake Denmark Naval Ammunition Depot in New Jersey exploded. Congress and the Department of the Navy decided a safer, more remote location for an ammunition depot must be found. The site outside of Hawthorne was selected due to its remoteness, the availability of federal land, and energetic lobbying on the part of Nevada's Congressional delegation. President Coolidge's Executive Order 4531 set aside 197 square miles (135,000 acres) for the West Coast US Naval Ammunition Depot, and ground-breaking ceremonies took place on July 24, 1928. The site for the facility was chosen because it was centrally located to all major west coast ports, its geographic isolation and mountainous perimeter, which provided a degree of protection and safety from disaster, and the arid climate was favorable for weapons development and storage. The construction of the depot had an immediate positive impact on Hawthorne's economy (Hohmann and Ryden 1997).

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Sixth Street School, Hawthorne, Mineral County, NV

8. Significance, continued

By 1930, Hawthorne's population had grown to 757, with the depot contributing 72 military personnel and 90 civilian employees to the total. Improvements to Hawthorne's infrastructure to accommodate the increased population included the upgrading of the water system and the opening of Hawthorne's first movie theater in 1929 (Hohmann and Ryden 1997). The presence of the depot helped Hawthorne through the Great Depression, but a number of President Roosevelt's New Deal programs were undertaken there to further help ameliorate joblessness. In October 1935, the first Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects were initiated, consisting mostly of road construction and repair. Other projects included courthouse repair and improvement, and curb and sidewalk construction (*Mineral County Independent*, October 23, 1935:1). The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), another New Deal program, operated at least three companies in Mineral County. The CCC made a major contribution to the development and construction of the Ammunition Depot (Hohmann and Ryden 1997).

With portents of war, activity at the Depot increased, as did Hawthorne's population, which had grown to 1,229 by 1940. The Hawthorne Depot was the principle naval ammunition plant on the west coast following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, creating a need for its expansion. Between 1941 and 1944, the Depot was enlarged to include housing and support facilities for workers and their families. The housing development associated with the Depot was called Babbitt, and by 1944, the combined population of the Depot, Babbitt, and Hawthorne rose to 13,000 (Hohmann and Ryden 1997).

Following World War II, the Depot was responsible for the disposal of thousands of tons of munitions and activity remained fairly constant. Hawthorne voted to incorporate in 1946, as it sought non-war-related income sources. The Depot continued to be the major employer through the Korean Conflict in the early 1950s, but after the cease fire and the release of thousands of defense workers, the need to diversify Hawthorne's economic base became imperative. In 1956, Hawthorne disincorporated. Although its population remained somewhat constant, the population of Babbitt was shrinking. In 1977, the Naval Ammunition Depot was turned over to the Department of the Army and the community of Babbitt was slowly dismantled. Management of the Depot was privatized in 1980, but its role in the local economy had shrunk considerably. Today, Hawthorne remains the Mineral County seat, and although the economy continues to be modest, it is more diversified than at any time in its history, focusing on tourism and mining (Hohmann and Ryden 1997).

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Sixth Street School, Hawthorne, Mineral County, NV

8. Significance, continued

Education and School Buildings in Hawthorne

Some attempt at providing school facilities was made in Nevada's territorial days (1861-1864). Once Nevada achieved statehood, the Constitution provided for a State Superintendent of Public Instruction and a uniform system of common schools. Except for certain administrative functions, establishment and maintenance of schools was the purview of each county, and the law allowed for the election of county school superintendents. The law stipulated what the duties of these elected county officials were, but no specific academic qualifications were established for the position. In 1895, the Legislature created the State Board of Education, with the Governor acting as president, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction as secretary, and the State Surveyor-General as a member. In 1907, the Legislature sought to improve the quality of Nevada education by supplanting the county superintendents with five deputy state superintendents overseeing five newly-established districts, state-wide (Brown 193-).

The first Nevada State Legislature established a variety of funding mechanisms for education, including proceeds from the sale of certain federal lands, the use of fines and bequests, and taxation at the county level. By 1874, the state owned 75 school buildings. That number increased to 134 by 1887. Of this number, 112 were built of wood, with the rest of adobe, stone, and/or brick. The relative quality of facilities and instruction varied greatly throughout the state between small, poor, rural schools, and those in larger, more prosperous communities. After the Education Reorganization Act of 1907, the Legislature sought to equalize the quality of education through the establishment of five state-wide districts. Professional training requirements for teachers were standardized and the rules by which the school census marshals enumerated students in each district was clarified so the distribution of funding was more equitable (Brown 193-).

Beginning in the latter nineteenth century, educators began to recognize that other aspects of the educational experience were as important as the curriculum. Health, safety, physical comfort, and exercise became major considerations in the planning of school facilities. By 1910, the one-story school building was considered the ideal, as it allowed for safety (particularly fire safety), good heating and ventilation, adequate lighting, and the opportunity for physical activity. By 1920, one-story schools were the norm and were considered the appropriate style for suburban neighborhoods. The State Board of Education standardized school design in Nevada in 1920, including development of uniform building codes for schools (Gillis 1957).

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Sixth Street School, Hawthorne, Mineral County, NV

8. Significance, continued

Hawthorne's first school was built in 1886, just five years after the sale of the first town lots. The school was a wood-framed, one-story, two-room building, with a belfry over the entrance. Although Hawthorne served as county seat of two counties during the early years, the town never had a large population. The two-room school no doubt served the community well until the construction of the Naval Ammunition Depot in 1929. By then the population pressures were great. The Depot had its own elementary school, Cotter School,¹ to accommodate children of military personnel, but the increase in the civilian population related to the Depot created an over-crowded condition in Hawthorne's elementary school. At that time, both of the elementary schools taught grades one through eight. Grades nine through twelve from both districts attended Mineral High School, located on A Street in Hawthorne, which was undergoing expansion in 1936 with the addition of a new wing (*Mineral County Independent* August 26, 1936).

By 1936, the old elementary school had seen 50 years of continuous service, and it was showing its age. It was deemed structurally unsound after a particularly fierce wind storm. Hence, at the behest of the community, the County School Board set the date of May 7, 1936 for the sale of school bonds in an effort to raise the \$30,000 needed to demolish the old school building and build a new one in its place (*Mineral County Independent* April 29, 1936:1). The bond sale was delayed on a technicality until July 23, 1936, but the bonds were successfully issued on that date. The bonds returned an interest rate of six percent and were to be retired at \$2000 per year. The bond issue was set to run for a fifteen year period, ending in 1957. The county property tax rate was increased \$0.58 per \$100 valuation in order to raise sufficient revenue to retire the first two bonds, meet the interest payment, and to operate the school during the 1936-1937 school year (*Mineral County Independent* July 29, 1936:1).

In order to clear the site for the new school, the old school building was sold at auction. The fixtures and equipment were removed from the building, and at 10 A. M., Thursday, June 11, 1936, the building was sold to William Gregory and Matt Baker for the grand sum of \$2.10. For this amount, Baker and Gregory would get all the salvaged lumber, but they were required to clear the property within ten days. Their's was the only bid received on the building. The school's library wing, a later

¹ The Cotter School, which offered grades 1 through 8 for children residing at the Depot, was named for Lt. Commander C. H. Cotter, the naval officer in charge of construction at the Navy Ammunition Depot.

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Sixth Street School, Hawthorne, Mineral County, NV

8. Significance, continued

addition, was sold separately for \$140. The 18-foot-by-46-foot structure was purchased by the 20-30 Club for use as a club house, as well as a facility for the Boy Scouts. The building was moved to a lot on A Street and remodeled for its new use (*Mineral County Independent* June 17, 1936, June 24, 1936).

On July 24, 1936, the construction contract for a new school was awarded to the firm of Kent and Nelson of Fallon, Nevada. The winning bid was \$26,954 and work was begun immediately, with E.M. Ferrel of Hawthorne serving as superintendent in charge of construction. The basement excavation was the first task undertaken, and the job was subcontracted to L.G. Stuntebeck of Hawthorne. Once the site grading and basement excavation were completed, Kent and Nelson operated two shifts to complete the building by the October 5th deadline (*Mineral County Independent* July 29, 1936:1). The building and grounds were designed by Willis H. Church, architect and H. H. Swinburne, landscape architect. The design was for a modernistic building with four classrooms, an auditorium, a library, and offices for the principal and teachers on the main floor, and the heating plant, lavatories, a storage room, and the lunch room in the basement. A large playground was planned for the north side of the building (*Mineral County Independent* July 29, 1936:1).

When school registration was held Monday, September 14, 1936, the new elementary school was not ready for occupancy (*Mineral County Independent* September 9, 1936:1). The school year started with classes for students in grades one through six held in the basement of Cotter School at the Naval Depot, while grades seven and eight met at the Hawthorne 20-30 Club. Completion of the school did not occur until mid-December. On Monday, December 14, 1936, Hawthorne's elementary school children moved into their new modern school building. The school boasted the latest amenities believed to be necessary for a sound education including, scientifically-arranged seating in the auditorium and classrooms, dome lights in all rooms, and natural lighting provided through liberal window space. An oil-burning central heating system heated the building by means of radiation, and each classroom was ventilated with purified air supplied through ventura fans, which also served as air conditioning during hot weather. The large playground was fully fenced to keep the children safe during recess periods. Cement sidewalks leading from the street to the main entrances were built by WPA crews (*Mineral County Independent* December 16, 1936:1).

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Sixth Street School, Hawthorne, Mineral County, NV

8. Significance, continued

The school's dedication ceremony was held Friday evening, February 12, 1937 in the auditorium. Principal A.L. Bernes conducted the program, and Neil J. McGee, clerk of the board of school trustees, spoke on the importance of the investment to the development and training of future citizens. Raymond Killian, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, made the trip from Carson City to make the official dedication. School children provided entertainment in the form of skits and a play, and the celebration lasted until midnight (*Mineral County Independent* February 17, 1937:1).

During the 1920s to 1940s, American society became captivated with modernism and technology. The coming of the Machine Age gave rise to consumerism, as machine-made items became widely available. Between 1920 and 1930, private automobile ownership rose to more than 26 million, and 80 percent of American urban dwellings were electrified. Radios, washing machines, toasters, refrigerators, and the movies became a part of American culture. The Art Deco style of architecture was one manifestation of this interest. Modernism also became a focus of educational programs, including the physical facility. Technology influenced the notions of light, safety, hygiene, and comfort in schools. To provide one's child access to the latest of modern technology was to assure him the ability to obtain his portion of the American Dream. Hawthorne's new grammar school was so noteworthy it was mentioned in the WPA Guide to the Silver State: "As elsewhere in the state, a school is one of the most impressive buildings—in this case a school for the lower grades. The low building of very modern design is up to date even to the Venetian shades at the windows" (WPA 1940:220).

The elementary school was barely open five years before student enrollment exceeded its capacity. The reason for Hawthorne's population explosion was U.S. mobilization for World War II. The Hawthorne Naval Ammunition Depot was the principal ammunition plant on the west coast, and as early as 1940, the area was flooded with military and civilian personnel. The Depot received its own housing development, named Babbitt, during this period, but the town of Hawthorne was not equipped to handle the overflow crowd. Housing and infrastructure could not meet the demand. Pressures such as these were being felt in communities nation-wide that were associated with military installations. Two federal laws were passed to help ease the burdens that expansion of defense installations imposed on local governments. These laws, the Lanham Defense Housing Act of 1940, and the Lanham Community Facilities Act of 1941, were put forward by Texas Congressman, Frederick G. Lanham. The Defense Housing Act provided dwellings near military

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Section 8 Page 10

Sixth Street School, Hawthorne, Mineral County, NV

8. Significance, continued

bases and defense plants, and was most likely the impetus behind the construction of the Babbitt Housing Development. The Community Facilities Act provided assistance with infrastructure needs, such as off-base housing, water supplies, sewage, welfare facilities, and day-care centers for women working in the defense industry (Garraty 1981:459).

As early as February 1942, Hawthorne was receiving benefits under the Community Facilities Act. These included a sewage treatment plant and expanded hospital facilities (*Mineral County Independent* February 25, 1942, April 8, 1942). Hawthorne's schools also received assistance from the Communities Facilities Act in the form of additions to the high school and the elementary school. Grant applications for these two expansion projects may have been submitted some time late in 1941, but by early 1942, both projects were in need of increased funding levels (*Mineral County Independent* January 14, 1942). The student population in Mineral County was growing at an unmanageable rate, with numbers doubling and tripling within one year's time. Besides the need for larger facilities, additions to the teaching staff were needed. This, too, proved problematical, because although a number of teachers were engaged, housing was so scarce that some of the newly-hired teachers were unable to accept their jobs when school started in the fall. A general call was made for citizens to open their homes to young teachers, but this proved insufficient (*Mineral County Independent* September 2, 1942).

The federal grant to expand the Sixth Street School was approved by President Roosevelt on February 16, 1942 in the amount of \$28,504, with grant funds coming through the Defense Public Works Act and the Federal Works Agency (*Mineral County Independent* April 8, 1942). This was an increase of more than \$11,000 over the original amount requested. The construction contract was given to the low bidder, O. and O. Novelly of Reno. Wendell Nelson of Fallon was the contractor on the original building, but his bid on the addition was not accepted (*Mineral County Independent* February 18, 1942). Plans called for three new class rooms to be built on the east end of the existing building. The addition was unornamented and stuccoed to match the existing building. Newspaper articles do not mention an architect on the project, but as simple as the design was, one may not have been employed for the work. Construction on the addition began in April 1942 and was completed in time for the start of school in the fall.

When school opened on September 8, 1942, Sixth Street School had a total of eight classrooms (the library had been converted to a classroom, as well) and Cotter School at the Depot offered four

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8. Significance, continued

classrooms. This was still inadequate to serve the nearly 600 elementary school students who enrolled that fall. Also, the federal grant used to pay for the expansion project required that double shifts be employed in cases where the federal government provided relief funds to pay the cost of construction. This situation was unsuitable for the long-term, however, and by May 1943, federal funds under the Lanham Act were approved for an additional elementary school, to be located on A Street (*Mineral County Independent* May 12, 1943). On August 4, 1943, the Mineral County Independent offered a breakdown of funding received in Hawthorne through the Lanham Act. The total was \$383,500 and included a federal recreation building, additions to the hospital, a deep-water well for the water system, a sewage disposal plant, a proposed new grammar school, and additions to the existing grade school. The total for the Sixth Street School alone exceeded \$45,000.

By the fall of 1944, the Mineral County grade-school enrollment exceeded 725. Even with expansions and a new school, there was over-population and split sessions were re-instituted for grades one and two, and the other grades were divided among the three schools (*Mineral County Independent* September 6, 1944). Mineral County schools continued to get federal funding through the Federal Works Agency to support maintenance of facilities throughout the war.

Following the war, activities at the Hawthorne Naval Depot continued, as did Hawthorne's population growth. In 1946, the population of Mineral County was estimated to be around 6,000, which represented an increase of 388.2 percent over the last official census taken in 1940 (*Mineral County Independent* November 27, 1946). With the majority of the population located in and around Hawthorne, the schools were bearing the brunt of the population pressure. The school district received a \$5,750 federal planning grant in late 1947 to prepare construction plans for a new elementary school and a second addition to the existing elementary school, which now offered sixth through eight grade instruction (*Mineral County Independent* September 10, 1947). In July 1948, the Mineral County Grand Jury issued a report on the county's schools, stating the following about the elementary school:

In the Hawthorne grammar school building, sanitary conditions and general cleanliness were found to be good for the most part, but some ventilation deficiencies need to be corrected. We noted that the library and auditorium are both too small, and that the latter has only one fire exit, also that the girls' rest room floor needs some repairing and that a rest room for teachers is desirable. In the sixth and eighth

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8. Significance, continued

grade rooms, the desks are too small for the children who occupy them. Plans are being made for a gymnasium, to be built when funds are available (*Mineral County Independent* July 7, 1948).

The problem of funding expansions of the county's schools remained, and various tax plans were examined including a statewide sales tax to benefit education (*Mineral County Independent* September 29, 1948). No additions were made to the elementary school, however, until 1950, when a new wing was added to the Sixth Street School. This came none too soon as enrollment for the 1950-51 school year broke the record set during the war years. This latest addition, which was made to the west end of the original building, cost \$10,000 and consisted of one classroom and a girls' lavatory. The contractor on the project was Mervin Gardner of Reno, with Harold Wright of Hawthorne as construction supervisor (*Mineral County Independent* August 16, 1950). As with the 1942 addition, no architect was mentioned in the newspaper articles. The later addition was even smaller than the first and imitated it in scale, massing, and surface treatment. Projecting, as it does, off the northwest corner, the addition has no visual impact to the front façade of the original school building.

In September 1950, President Harry Truman signed a bill providing \$175,000,000 in direct governmental assistance for building and improving school facilities affected by federal activities. Mineral County qualified for the program because of the ammunition depot and several school building expansions, including the recent addition to the Sixth Street School, were undertaken with these funds (*Mineral County Independent* September 27, 1950). The 1950 addition would be the last for the Sixth Street School, as Mineral County's population stabilized after the Korean conflict, and other school facilities were built.

The Sixth Street School's evolution is interesting in that it was originally built during the Great Depression using a local bond issue rather than any New Deal funds that may have been available. When World War II started, however, increased activity at the ammunition depot forced the school district to seek assistance from federal programs instituted to assist communities impacted by military installations. The Sixth Street School was expanded at a time of tremendous population growth in Mineral County and in no small way it served America's war effort.

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8. Significance, continued

Criterion C

The Sixth Street School is a modest, yet outstanding example of the Art Deco style. Its significance is enhanced by the fact that it is the only representative of its type in Hawthorne. The building is low and spare in its massing. Ornamentation on the building is spare, as well, and in the form of extenuated Art Deco pilasters bracketing the entrances on the front façade. One observer explained in 1928 that the style is characterized by “Straight lines; it is angular, geometric and tends to follow cubic proportions The lines are unvaryingly plain and severe, with touches of decoration in the way of color, wrought iron and glass work for relief” (Gebhard 1996:4). The Sixth Street School fits this description perfectly.

The Art Deco style, and its later derivation, Art Moderne, had a run of popularity generally from 1920 to 1940. Its name makes reference to the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, which took place in Paris in 1925. The exposition was a principal source of the new look in architecture and design. Art Deco represented a desire on the part of architects and designers to seek out new forms, or modifications of old forms, to express the continually-changing character and accelerated tempo of the new age. As modern and radical as the style seemed, it traced its roots to the Beaux-Arts tradition and many architects trained in this school turned their sights to the new language of design after 1925, but for the most part the forms they produced were derived from classical precedents.

The young architect who designed the Sixth Street School was trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition in the architecture department at the University of Pennsylvania. Willis Humphry Church, who had received a bachelor of arts degree at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) in 1923, was the eldest son of Dr. James E. Church, Jr. Dr. Church was a UNR classics professor, and the campus’ fine arts building bears his name. Dr. Church is most well-known for work that was far from his classics training. He is considered the father of the Nevada snow survey, which measured the water content of snow, as well as its depth. Dr. Church pioneered the scientific study of snow, as well as the “Nevada System,” which predicts the percentage of runoff from snow. This was significant because water has long been a valuable commodity in Nevada, which lies in an arid high desert in the north and the Sonoran desert in the south, and where runoff from the snowpack has caused extensive flooding along the Sierran water systems.

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8. Significance, continued

After graduating from UNR, Willis went east to study architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, although he retained his Nevada ties. He graduated from Penn with a bachelor of science degree in architecture on June 20, 1928. His undergraduate education was classical and traditional, following Beaux-Arts methods. He counted among his mentors such faculty members as Paul Cret, Milton Medary, William Rutherford Mead, and H. Magonigle, and among his friends, Louis Kahn and Warren Hoak. During the summer of 1925, Willis Church and his classmate, Warren Hoak, conceived the notion to produce a book on "modern" American architecture (Church n.d. NC96/1/1, July 13, 1925). The resulting volume, entitled *Masterpieces of Architecture in the United States*, was published by Scribner's in 1930. The book presented photographs and measured drawings of works that typified the best in contemporary American architecture (Hoak and Church 1930).

After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, Willis and his wife, Anne, embarked on a "third class" voyage around the world studying architecture. Upon their return, Willis enrolled in the University of Pennsylvania's master's of architecture program. It was during this second phase of his education that Willis' philosophy on architecture took a turn away from his Beaux-Arts training. There was a general trend in architecture away from the classical following the Exposition Internationale in 1925, but in his letters to his father, Willis described the change in his own thinking, which was due in part to the economic exigencies of the Great Depression. He explained in a January 12, 1932 letter:

There are a number of us here, both designers and engineers, who feel that architecture of today is of necessity becoming more and more unified and standardized and that it will continue to do so. We feel certain that the old time Beaux Art plan & the pseudo-classic elevation such as the Reno Court House, Reno National Bank, and the University buildings will go--that such things having a so called true style will go. The old line architects and their 'non-thinking' students are on the wrong track.

In these days of economy the fullest advantage must be taken of materials and the whole put into a safe and sane use. We feel that we should no longer, when given a design to do, pick up a piece of paper and make a pretty sketch. Rather we should know what skeleton is necessary to carry the clothes. This therefore means that the architect must accept the limits of steel, concrete, tile etc. and scientifically make a

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building correct We are thinking too of the better planning of hospitals, schools, and office buildings, civic centers and recreation units (Church n.d. NC96/1/1 January 12, 1932).

Willis Church, along with several of his classmates, determined to put into practice their scientific method for designing buildings. For their first problem, they chose to design an art museum for Reno:

. . . All of our technical research shall go into it--young designers with ability and imagination tempered by a practical wish will work out the plan, elevation and landscaping. Young engineers will search for the cheapest method of construction commensurate with the design--and with that a thoroughly sound one. . . (Church n.d. NC96/1/1 January 12, 1932).

Willis' plans for the Nevada Art Gallery in Reno were partially completed and the landscape designs were drawn by Horace Prentiss Boardman. These are on file at the Special Collections Library at the University of Nevada, Reno, and although the museum was never built, the seeds of modern architecture had been planted in Willis Church's mind.

Willis Church graduated with a master's of architecture on February 17, 1934, and apparently returned to Nevada with his wife. His name appeared in the 1934-1936 biennial report of the Nevada State Highway Department as an assistant architect. During this period, H. H. Swinburne was the supervising architect at the Highway Department, but in the 1936-1938 biennial report, Swinburne is listed as a landscape architect, and Willis Church is not mentioned at all. When bids for the Hawthorne school were solicited, Willis Church and Herbert Swinburne submitted drawings and were ultimately successful in winning the contract. According to long-time editor of the Mineral County Independent and Hawthorne News, Jack McClosky, local architects were in a furor over Willis' receipt of the commission. They apparently saw him as a young, inexperienced upstart from out-of-state, without knowing he was a native son (McClosky, personal communication, February 1995). This conflict was not based on licensure, however, as Nevada did not license architects until the late 1940s.

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8. Significance, continued

Little is known of Willis Church or H.H. Swinburne after the 1930s, but Willis apparently left Reno to live and work in another state, possibly to California's San Francisco Bay Area. Willis has been described as bright and intense, but alcoholism prevented him from fulfilling his potential, and at one time he was institutionalized in Napa State Hospital in California. Willis Church died on November 4, 1969 of a heart attack in a San Francisco hospital (Susan Searcy, personal communication, May 17, 1999). Although, Willis Church did not become a well-known or prolific architect, his personal philosophy of architecture, as it was transformed during his post-graduate days, was manifested in the Sixth Street School. The school clearly demonstrated his ideal of modern, scientific design and economy of materials "put into a safe and sane use" (Church n.d. NC96/1/1 January 12, 1932). The Art Deco style lent itself to this new paradigm.

Other examples of Art Deco architecture exist in Nevada, dating from the early 1930s to the late 1940s. Several Reno structures were rendered in this style, although most of these date to the post-war period. The Art Moderne Veterans Memorial School was Reno's first post-war school, built in 1949 and listed in the National Register in 1995. Landrum's Diner, a small prefabricated Art Deco diner, was brought to Reno on a rail car in 1947. It was listed in the National Register in 1998. The Veterans Hospital in Reno was built in 1947 in a similar style (*Nevada State Journal* 1947), and the El Cortez Hotel (1931) and the Mapes Hotel-Casino (1947), two excellent examples of Art Deco architecture, were listed in the National Register in 1984. Additional Nevada properties in the Art Deco tradition include the Nevada State Supreme Court Building in Carson City (built 1935 by the Public Works Administration and listed in 1987), Las Vegas High School, a Mayan Revival/Art Deco design, (built 1930-31, listed in 1986), the Lincoln County Courthouse (1938), considered eligible for the National Register, and several simplified examples in Lovelock, and Winnemucca, Nevada.

Summary

The Sixth Street School represents several historical themes, including education, U.S. military installations, and U.S. World War II defense legislation. The school also embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Art Deco style of architecture and its importance in architectural history. Although it has not served as a school for more than a decade, it is currently undergoing rehabilitation and adaptive reuse as an arts center. The project has received financial assistance through Nevada's Commission for Cultural Affairs, which requires that rehabilitation be conducted

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8. Significance, continued

in compliance the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. Over the past ten years, the school has withstood several attempts to demolish it, but the efforts of a few individuals have prompted the community to recognize the building's importance. Once rehabilitation is complete, the school will again serve the population of Mineral County and stand as a symbol of its history.

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9. Bibliography, continued

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9. Bibliography, continued

Jack McClosky, personal communication, February 1995.

Susan Searcy, Manuscript Curator, Special Collections Department, University of Nevada, Reno Library, May 17, 1999, via e-mail.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

A 1.72-acre lot identified as Assessor's Parcel Number 01-133-03.

Boundary Justification

Resource boundaries includes all land commonly associated with APN 01-133-03.

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Sixth Street School, Hawthorne, Mineral County, NV

Photographs

The following applies to both photographs:

Sixth Street School, Sixth and C Streets, Hawthorne

Mineral County, Nevada

Photograph 1:

Name of photographer: Tony Hughes
Date of photograph: July 1999
Location of original negative: Independent News
Hawthorne, Nevada
Direction of view: North

Photograph 2:

Name of photographer: William K. Glenzer
Date of photograph: 1936
Location of original negative: William K. Glenzer
Salem, Oregon
Copy on file at:
State Historic Preservation Office
701 North Stewart Street
Carson City, NV 89701
Direction of view: Northwest